

JUMUAH



# The Road to Happiness

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## **Acknowledgement**

My sincere thanks and appreciation go out to Professor Nasser Al-Omar whose lecture series: “Happiness between Illusion and Reality” was the foundation for this book.



## Publisher's Note

Islam is the religion chosen by Allah to save mankind from the deadly Satanic tricks. It is the divine candle bestowed by Him upon people to guide them away from the pitfalls of life. Thereby it purifies the soul, and allows it to comprehend the fact that it has been created for one sacred duty: to worship Allah.

Because Islamic books are commonly written in Arabic, millions of non-Arab Muslims are deprived of getting Islamic knowledge. This has made a center of translation a pressing need. And with Allah's blessing and help we were able to achieve such a sublime goal, and we hope that our efforts will effectively contribute to the propagation of Islam.

The aim of the center of translation is to use translation as a means of *da'wa*. Our task is to provide non-Arab Muslims as well as truth seekers with Islamic material of high authenticity, so that they may get better understanding of Islam.

May Allah help us accomplish our duty successfully.

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## Foreword

Most people are in total agreement about the pursuit of one goal in their life: happiness. This is true of all people whether they are devoutly religious or atheist, leaders or followers, rich or poor; they all long to achieve happiness. However, because people belong to different religious denominations, or schools of thought, have different feelings, wishes and aspirations, it is almost impossible to reach a universal definition of “happiness”.

Notwithstanding the consensus of all human beings on seeking happiness, it is not surprising that people have defined for themselves various ways and avenues to achieve this common goal. And in so doing, a large number of them seem to have missed the target and have only succeeded in attaining what can be termed as ‘illusory’ and “transitory” happiness as opposed to “real” and “permanent” happiness.

With this in mind, the present this book aims at re-examining two of the most popular concepts widely held to be conducive to happiness. It attempts to establish whether or not they can truly lead to happiness that so many people are searching for.

F. William Hamerman

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## Introduction

Very often people meet with incidents and situations in their lives that make them unhappy. Later, when, they recover their consciousness and reflect on such incidents and situations, they find that their unhappiness was simply a reaction, no more, no less. People, however, react differently to any given situation, and are able to achieve a higher degree of stability and tolerance if they can cope with the given situation effectively.

A neighbor of the well-known German philosopher Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) had a rooster that never stopped crowing. It terribly annoyed Kant and distracted him from his work. When Kant got fed up with the crowing of the rooster, he sent his servant to buy, slaughter, and prepare it for lunch. He then invited a friend of his to have lunch with him. As both men sat waiting for lunch, Kant talked to his friend about the rooster and the annoyance it used to cause him and described the peace and quiet he was enjoying after he had gotten rid of it. When the servant brought them the food, he explained that the neighbor had refused to sell his rooster, so he purchased another one from the market. At that moment, Kant became aware of the fact that the rooster was still crowing.

It seems as though this well-known philosopher, felt miserable one moment, and happy the next, although the rooster was still crowing. Despite the fact that what was disturbing him still existed, there was a psychological change within himself. Apparently,

the inner-self, not the rooster, was the determining factor of his happiness or unhappiness.

Many people sleep disturbed neither by the intense noise of horn-honking cars nor by the screams of children playing in the street; yet, the sound of a footstep or a whisper inside their bedrooms wakes them up. Similarly, people sleeping on a train will not be disturbed by the talk of those sitting next to them. What makes them endure the intense horn-honking noises of cars, the screaming of children, or the noisy people on the train, though a whisper or footstep usually arouses them from their sleep?

It is because sensation is like a light which, when on, makes things around you visible whether they are pleasing or displeasing to you, and when it is off you fail to hear the noises in the street even though they are louder. In fact, the low whisper they heard in their bedrooms was because they directed their senses and attention to it; but they missed other sounds because they blocked them out of their perception despite their loudness, so the sounds disappeared, just as large objects disappear in the dark.

Therefore, why not divert our attention and senses from all the discomforts of life? Not all discomforts penetrate into the heart; only what a person allows into his / her heart willingly, will enter. So why don't more people strengthen and fortify themselves against pain and discomfort?

Two men of equal physical strength may carry the same load. The first may complain as if he carried double the weight, while the other may laugh and sing as if he carried nothing.

Two men of similar physique may suffer from the same illness. One may react pessimistically and may always be thinking of death, thereby intensifying his illness, whereas the other may endure patiently, feel optimistic and expect a quick recovery, thereby expediting his return to a state of good health.

Bismarck, the man of iron and blood, genius of war and peace, could not give up smoking for one moment. He used to light up one cigarette after another all day long. Without smoking, he was not able to think, plan or take any appropriate action. Once, while in war, he found only one cigarette left in his pocket, so he put off smoking it until the most critical time. He waited for a full week without smoking, entertaining the hope of using the cigarette in the most critical situation. After that week, he realized that he was able to do without smoking. He then decided to stop smoking for good because he did not want his happiness to be dependent on a single cigarette.

A man exhausted with illness would at once jump out of bed if he suddenly noticed a snake crawling towards him. He would act as if he were full of health and vigor. By the same token, imagine a man returning home exhausted with hunger, looking for a chair to rest on, only to receive a call from a dear friend whom he hasn't seen in years saying he's on his way to visit him. Imagine him getting an urgent message from the governor congratulating him with the news of his promotion. He would at once feel lighthearted and full of energy and would run as quickly as he could to the Governor's office, or hurry to get himself washed up before his friend arrived.



Such powers are the source of happiness, and if they are truly so, it seems as though we are all very rich, but we do not realize it. Some people may suffer from diabetes, cancer, or even AIDS, which makes them feel that their future is bleak and without any ray of hope. Why didn't they see the bright side of life when they were healthy? If someone goes on a diet, he or she will long for a mouthful of bread or meat and envy those who enjoy various foods. Why didn't they value the pleasures of food before their illnesses? Why do people recognize the value of something only after they have lost it? Why do old people lament the passing of their youth, while a young person fails to cherish it? Why are we aware of happiness only when it is far from us? Almost everybody is lamenting and yearning for his or her past. Why didn't they think about the present before it became part of the past?

We may think that richness can be attained by possession of money alone. What can money alone give to man? You may have heard of the sick king who was brought the most delicious meals, but he was unable to eat any of them. Once, he was looking through a window of his palace, when his eyes caught a farmer eating brown bread with black olives: pushing one mouthful into his mouth, taking a second in his hand, and setting his eyes on a third. The king wished he had been a farmer if only he could enjoy such an appetite.

Why don't we recognize the value of health? Is there no value for health? Who would agree to give up their sight for a hundred thousand dollars, or part of their nose for the riches of a millionaire? Gold and money cannot give life and happiness to every person. The well-known Mr. Rothschild entered his

large safe one day, and while he was inside, the door slammed shut behind him, and he died in a sea of gold. Why are we seeking gold so anxiously though we possess ample gold? Isn't sight as precious as gold? And health and time... and the human mind; aren't all these treasures? Why don't we make the best of our time? Why don't we recognize the value of life? Why don't we make the best use of our minds? Health, time and intellect are invaluable sources of wealth that may lead people to happiness if they use them correctly.

Let us consider the crimes and evils of modern societies: murders, suicides, rapes, drug abuse, robberies, thefts, not to mention sexual, neurological, psychological, juvenile and other abnormalities and disorders. The existence of such social ills in our society on such a large scale indicates that many people are suffering because of the absence of true happiness - the happiness that springs from human nature and does not conflict with logic, reason and established facts of science. They are suffering because of the lack of awareness of the real aim behind man's existence in this universe, which is to build and establish an ideal and sound society and to free man from destructive inclinations, and the world from injustice and tyranny.

But what is the right way to achieving that goal which has been pursued by mankind throughout history? Truly, this is the one question we must find an answer to if we intend to progress as a people into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

## **Concepts on the Attainment of Happiness**

Many different concepts have emerged over time as a possible means to achieving absolute happiness. However, in the past few decades, two of these main theories have risen to the forefront of world culture, and our discussion will be focused on them throughout the remainder of this book; these are

1. The Materialistic concept
2. The Islamic concept

The materialistic concept upholds that real happiness lies in materialism, whereas the Islamic concept states that the three types of life the spiritual, the material and the rational are together essential elements of happy life if they are governed by a proper system of beliefs, morals, practices and values. But first, we must define what happiness really is.

### **Definition of happiness**

According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, "happiness is a state of well-being characterized by relative permanence, by dominantly agreeable emotion ranging in value from mere contentment to deep and intense joy in living, and by a natural desire for its continuation". In the distinction between this term and its synonyms (i.e., felicity, bliss), it defines "happiness" as, "the general term denoting enjoyment of or pleasure and satisfaction in well being, security, or fulfillment of wishes." "Felicity" - a more

bookish or elevated word - may denote higher, more lasting, or more perfect happiness. "Bliss" may apply to a complete and assured felicity."

Some students of education and psychology define "happiness" as "the continued feeling or state of delight, contentment, and joy emanating from the permanent sense of self-goodness, goodness of life and goodness of man's destiny."

## **The Materialistic Concept**

Different people may have different ideas with regard to the best ways of achieving happiness. However, there are several theories and speculations which many people share as constituting the main sources of happiness. These may be classified as follows:

- (1) Wealth
- (2) Rank and position
- (3) Educational achievements
- (4) Fame (i.e., in politics, arts, sports, science, etc.).

### **(1) Happiness in Wealth**

For most people wealth is, probably, the element widely associated, if not identified, with happiness. This understanding is so deep-rooted in the hearts of so many people that they are engrossed in the acquisition of wealth. They look towards wealth as the primal element of happiness to the point that they consider them directly related to each other.

How happy are those men and women who own business empires, wide expanses of land, large estates, huge bank accounts, etc? Indeed there are many people who own millions or even billions, but lack the peace of mind because of their fear over their wealth. It may be the fear of unexpected market movements, wars, theft, etc. Such fear then may lead these people to sleepless nights, intense stress, mental anguish, possible heart attacks, and even to death.

Understanding and accepting that happiness has nothing to do with the amassing of wealth is perhaps the most liberating realization we can ever come to.

## **(2) Happiness in Rank and Position**

Can real happiness be attained through the acquirement of high societal status or powerful positions in society? For many the answer is in the affirmative. However, when we deeply examine the nature of having a certain rank or position in society and the responsibilities, which they involve, the evidence does not appear so clear. In fact, it has been often found that the person who is entrusted with authority over others may find that his position has become a source of misery and corruption if he does not conduct his affairs on the basis of justice and moral standards. Consequently, such a person may face the following:

- Loss of public confidence.
- Divisions between the person in authority and those under their authority.
- Increased tension, fear and insecurity.
- Mental anguish and restlessness along with troubled conscience.
- An increase in the number of people opposed to the person's authority, and increase of personal enmity from amongst his constituents.
- The necessity to protect one's position at all costs.

### **(3) Happiness in Educational Achievements**

Now we might ask again, where is happiness? Is it in obtaining the highest level of education and in earning post-graduate degrees? If knowledge and scientific research are taken as an end in themselves at the cost of moral and spiritual values, then even the most learned person would ‘unhappily’ be regressed to “the lowest of the low” despite any qualifications, degrees, credentials and honors he or she might possess. While advancement in knowledge and science alone may work well, it often has destructive consequences in certain matters especially if it has to be at the expense of others.

### **(4) Happiness in fame**

There are two main activities with which fame is usually associated:

- (1) Sports
- (2) Acting

How much happiness do “famous” men and women in these activities enjoy? Let us take a brief look at each of these two activities in turn.

#### **(1) Sports:**

Physical exercise and sporting activities are valuable things in themselves. They help prepare our minds and bodies for other important matters in life. However, the question is “Are these activities taken now for more

than what they are worth in our modern society?" If taken as an end in themselves, they may deflect our minds away from the more serious aspects of our personal lives. Sports, indeed have now become a sort of a 'religion' for participants and fans alike, 'they run in their blood!'

Therefore, if sports are carried to such an extreme, one cannot fail to realize some of the potential 'suffering' to which such men and women are exposed as a result of this pressure. They become prone to mental strain that manifests itself in the following:

1- Because of their anxiety and pressure to win, say, a particular game, and the eagerness to enhance their physical capabilities at any cost, athletes might be tempted to use drugs that may seriously damage their health.

2- The "big blow," the despair, the embarrassment, the agony, the shame and the ridicule from the "fans" upon losing a game may add to the athlete's anxiety.

3- The loss of a job, or quitting the team after losing a game or, worse, getting fired always remains a possibility.

## **(2) Acting:**

Here we would like to focus on those people directly engaged in the field of entertainment namely, film and stage actors, singers, dancers, etc. Is the world of entertainment a source of true happiness?

Many people still equate happiness with fun. The truth of the matter, however, is that fun and happiness have little or nothing in common. The correct



and logical conclusion would be that fun is what we experience *during* an act, while happiness is what we experience *after* an act. Happiness is a deeper, more enduring, more meaningful and more abiding emotion. Going to an amusement park or to a ball game, watching a movie or television are fun activities that 'may' help someone to relax. One may temporarily forget his problems and may even laugh. However, these are things, which do not, and could not, definitely bring any real happiness to the person because their positive effects usually last only as long as the fun itself lasts.

A much deeper analysis into the matter is achieved when we look into the so-called "fun and entertainment" around us. It is a fact that individuals such as actors, actresses, etc. have constant access to enormous amounts of wealth, glamorous parties, fancy cars, expensive homes and everything that seems to spell happiness. However, memoir after memoir of these 'celebrities' unveils the sorrow hidden beneath all their fun; it is depression, alcoholism, drug addiction, children out of wedlock, broken marriages, troubled children, illicit relations, loneliness, mental anguish, etc.

While discussing fun and entertainment, there is a related subject, which we feel, must not go unmentioned and that is the detrimental effects of the lifestyle of the men and women of stage and screen upon popular culture, viewers, and fans. The following two articles which were taken from some internationally distributed United States publications discuss different aspects of this major problem. The writers of the reports were, of course, discussing the

extent and seriousness of the matter with reference, to and in the context of, the United States, but the problem is global.

**Article one: by Michael Medved**

“The value of self-discipline so essential to normal family life is portrayed only rarely in the popular culture. Nearly two-thirds of all American adults are married, but movies today focus overwhelmingly on single people, and those few films that do show a family most often depict a marriage that is radically dysfunctional (completely abnormal) with a husband accused of attempting to murder his wife (as in *Reversal of Fortune*) or a wife sleeping with her husband’s female friend (as in *Henry & June*) or a married pair trying to kill each other (as in *The War of the Roses*). When I complained about the destructive product of the entertainment industry, colleagues urged me to stop worrying; it’s a simple matter to tune out. An incident last spring reminded me it was not so easy to do that.

My family and I went on an outing to a public park on a mountain lake near Santa Barbara, California. Our daughters, ages one and three, went toddling off toward the ducks. The one year-old was saying, “Duckie! Duckie!” one of her first words and reaching out to the birds with her chubby arms. My wife and I looked on with satisfaction. Soon after that a group of teenagers carrying a ‘boom box’ arrived at the lakeshore. Coming out of their shiny chrome machine was a rap song full of four-letter words describing rape,

feces and oral sex. Our girls had never heard those particular words before. They were frightened by the noise and started to cry. I suppose we could have stayed and made a scene, but I don't carry assault weapons in my trunk. Instead we abandoned the beautiful scene to those brutish kids.

The point is that you can't just tune out the popular culture today. The messages, the images, are everywhere. Is it a coincidence that the war on standards in art, music, television and film corresponds with increasingly destructive behavior on the part of the young people who are the most devoted consumers of these media? Is there no connection between the media's obsession with crime and violence and the fact that the number of kids under 19 who are arrested has increased by 120 percent since 1963? Is there no connection between the sex-crazed popular culture and the fact that out-of-wedlock births have increased 350 percent since 1960?

Ironically, media moguls downplay the significance of their work, insisting that sex and violence on screen do not encourage sex and violence in real life. But the same industry then turns around and asks advertisers to pay tens of thousands of dollars for 30 seconds of airtime in the hope that this fleeting exposure would directly alter the public's buying behavior.

The war on standards in the popular culture is the issue of the 1990s. Expanded censorship is not the way to win it and attempts to move in that direction would only prove to be counter-productive. Boycotts of sponsors, direct protests, letter-writing campaigns

and other forms of private-sector pressures are far more effective than new government regulations. While we are working to prevent the further pollution of our culture, we should do more than protest the bad. We should also remember to promote the good, which is undoubtedly beneficial to us.

## **Article two: by Bob Green**

“Millions of families sat down in their living rooms one evening last August to watch a live Madonna concert from France, telecast on the cable network Home Box Office (HBO). Since Madonna is such a huge international star the telecast was heavily promoted and aired at prime time on a weekend, millions of children certainly watched with their parents. What happened on all those screens was that Madonna repeatedly used the one obscene word that has been routinely barred from the public airways. Later in the show she writhed on a bed and simulated masturbation. She also laughingly used common street terms for male genitals.

We live in an anything-goes-age, so that television shows with witless and purposely vulgar content are not surprising. The language itself was nothing that has not been heard in movies or on cable TV comedy specials. The surprising thing was that so few parents called HBO to object. A spokesperson for the network said the complaints “were not by any stretch of the imagination overwhelming” and that the Madonna concert was the highest rated original entertainment program in the network’s history. Apparently, America’s parents have totally given up hope that they could control what their children are exposed to on TV.

What is most disturbing is this event appeared in America’s homes during prime time on a Sunday, and people seemed to think it was no big deal. The television, in a way that now seems quaint, was once considered almost sacred ground when it came to

certain material precisely because children were watching. Now the country has been so beaten down by a lessening of public standards that obscenities could be telecast to millions of families without causing even a ripple of protest. What of the argument that parents should just turn off the TV if they don't like the programming?

It's valid, but there was no warning before Madonna launched into her first rapid fire round of obscenities. Although the telecast was promoted as being live, it actually was taped hours before. The network knew what it was sending out. Yet it did so without deletions or an advisory notice at the beginning of the show. This was "a creative decision," HBO says.

HBO, as a cable network, is not bound by the same restrictions placed on the over the air networks. But this nicely is undoubtedly lost on children who have grown up with cable TV in their homes. To them, HBO is just another stop on the dial. Those children will hear worse in their lifetimes, in fact, they probably already have. To telecast a concert like Madonna's is no longer considered particularly controversial, but to wonder publicly about the wisdom of it to say that delivering such a performance to the nation's children is wrong that is considered controversial. To say it is wrong is to seem out of step with the rest of the world, but it is wrong. It is dead wrong. The cry is loud but are there any listeners?"

## **The Islamic Concept**

Indeed, human beings are a combination of three main ingredients: the body, the mind and the soul. The body is nourished by food and drink, the mind by the quest for knowledge and the soul by faith and morality. Additionally, human beings possess impulses, drives, and feelings, desires and whims that may influence their characters and ways of life. They are endowed with the ability to think, reason and perceive so that they can control their wills and emotions and direct themselves towards the course of action that they believe to be most suitable for them. However, their minds and emotions may lapse at times and lead them away from the right path. They may unknowingly stray away from the way to success and happiness and take the course to chaos and misery, thereby bringing suffering and destruction upon themselves and upon others.

Hence it is a necessity for all human beings to achieve a profound understanding of the spiritual guidance, which leads them to the plain truth about their existence in this world, their relation to the universe and to other creatures, and about the purpose of their creation. Spiritual guidance will make them ask themselves how they came into existence and think about the correct course that leads them to real happiness.

The Islamic concept, when put into practice, leads mankind to the right direction and channels all their energies and efforts into a constructive scheme of life. To begin with, faith is complementary to reason. Therefore, reason is not the antithesis of faith as is the

case in some other human belief systems and religions. The Islamic concept helps to develop the human mind and does not impose any kind of illogical concept or undue restrictions on it, as is mentioned in the the Holy Quran - the main reference book of the Islamic concept – *“But say, Oh my Lord! Advance me in knowledge.”*<sup>1</sup> In addition, Muhammad Ibnu Abdillah (the messenger who transmitted the founding principles of the Islamic concept) stressed the importance of the pursuit of knowledge as an integral part of the road to happiness by saying: *“If a person follows the path which leads to the acquisition of knowledge, Allah will make easy the way to the Paradise for him.”*<sup>2</sup> The Islamic concept leads man in the way of truth since he is guided by the words and commandments of his Creator, Who knows what is best for him. The pursuit of knowledge provides a person with a feeling of enjoyment and pleasure. If a person enjoys having delicious meals for his body, he will also enjoy more delicious meals (of knowledge) for his mind and soul.

Islam not only encourages, but also requires man to seek knowledge and to live in the light of learning. Islam is a way of life based on knowledge and not on superstition. The first words of the 96<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Quran instruct the people to read (as a means of gaining knowledge) and in that same chapter it is stated that the Creator taught mankind *“with the pen”* and taught man *“what he did not know”*.

Islam places strong emphasis on the need for excellent learning, as noted in the following excerpts from the Quran:



*"And say 'Oh, my Lord! Advance me in knowledge'."*<sup>3</sup>

*"Those who truly fear Allah among His servants are those who have knowledge."*<sup>4</sup>

*"Are they equal, those who know and those who do not know?"*<sup>5</sup>

Muhammad also left behind many authentic sayings and teachings in this regard emphasizing the importance and superiority of knowledge. In one of his sayings, he said that: *"seeking knowledge is every Muslim's duty."*<sup>6</sup>

Such is the concept of Islam with regard to learning that it leaves wide open all fields of thought before the human intellect to penetrate as far as it can reach. It frees, and lays down no restrictions against, the freethinker who seeks knowledge to widen his vision and to broaden his mind. However, such intellectual development is not, and can not, be pursued as an absolute objective in itself. It is not independent under the Islamic concept, but interconnected with moral values and guidelines. It is only in the Islamic concept that the intellect may get complete nourishment, and intellectual life may become enriched so as to be constructive and useful. It is only by such integration of the intellectual and the spiritual values that the person's internal nature becomes sound, healthy and happy.

If we look at human civilization throughout history, we will see how knowledge has improved man's life and introduced many positive innovations

and facilities for the service of man. However, knowledge and science are a two-edged weapon: they can raise lofty towers, but can level them to the ground just as easily. So knowledge must be channeled into the right way that leads to happiness. Despite the tremendous advancement in human knowledge, particularly in science and technology, it is sad that their full potential is generally geared towards oppression, trespassing on human resources, violation and suppression of basic human rights, international terrorism and blackmail, etc.

One of the basic Islamic principles is related to harmony in this universe. Many scientists and thinkers believe that there is a conflict between mankind and nature, and that mankind is struggling to overcome the powers of nature. Islam corrects this shortsighted notion. It states that everything in this world has been created to serve mankind, and mankind has been created to serve The Supreme Being. Therefore, the relationship between man and the universe is one of harmony and friendliness. This fact alone provides mankind with peace of mind, satisfaction and happiness. It also frees their minds from worries, fears and hostile feelings. Thereby, man's life becomes inspired with love, hope, optimism, contentment and happiness, and these are the factors that enable man to face hardships with complete confidence.

At the same time the Islamic way to happiness doesn't deny mankind's materialistic needs. It emphasizes the need for the enrichment of both material and spiritual values simultaneously in such a way that they become deeply infused into the individual's life.

Islam takes a positive view of life with virtue, not shunning the bounties of the Supreme Being, but enjoying them within the framework of "righteous living" through which Islam seeks to promote human welfare, as noted in the following passage from the Quran:

*"Oh, you who believe! Make not unlawful the good things, which Allah has made lawful for you, but commit no excess: for Allah loves not those given to excess. Eat of the things which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good; but fear Allah, in Whom you believe."*<sup>7</sup>

In addition, Muhammad described the "golden rule" of happiness in the following words:

*"Take advantage of five before five: your youth before your senility; your health before your sickness; your wealth before your poverty; your leisure before your occupation; and, your life before your death."*<sup>8</sup>

Youth - the prime of man - should be used in a fruitful and constructive way. Health - the golden opportunity in life - should be used for the prevention of diseases. Wealth - an important opportunity - must be used for protection from poverty. And excessive leisure - a major problem of our contemporary world - must be treated with a sense of responsibility and used only for constructive and worthwhile activities. Finally, life itself - the greatest gift from Allah to mankind - is an opportunity for them to prepare themselves for the final journey into the future world.

At the same time, the Islamic concept discourages people from allowing their impulses, desires, and wants to rule their lives. Muhammad was quoted as saying: *'May he perish who is the slave of dinar and dirham...'*<sup>9</sup> (The dinar and dirham were currency used during the time of Muhammad, which would be equivalent to the dollar and cent or pound and pence of today).

Happiness springs from inside the human mind and heart. Therefore, peace of mind and psychological security play a major role in the attainment of happiness. Many wealthy people can not find the way to happiness despite the luxury they enjoy. That is due to their lack of the aforesaid factor. At the same time, many people who lack the luxury of life enjoy such inner security, and through this they experience a great deal of happiness. Security may also be established and strengthened by mutual mercy and sympathy and caring for sectors of society badly in need of protection and assistance. Therefore, the Islamic concept heavily encourages charitable acts, donations, etc. as a purification of one's wealth and a stabilizing factor for the economy as a whole. This in turn provides the members of the society with feelings of love and compassion for each other, and with a sense of security by removing greed and poverty which are often barriers to true happiness.

Organization of family affairs also helps to remove some of the causes of anxiety. The following verse from the Quran on the wife-husband relationship clarifies this concept:

*"...and among His (Allah's) signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect."*<sup>10</sup>

It is this mutual relationship of love, mercy and affection that gives the sense of security to the whole family, including children who enjoy this sense under the protection of their parents. This relationship is well organized in the society, and subscribes to the Islamic concept, including the prescription of the rights and obligations for every member of the family so that stability may prevail in their lives.

On a larger scope, Islam laid down the foundations of security and peace in society by establishing comprehensive and fair rules and regulations for all human affairs: moral, social, political, military, economic and other fields of human endeavor.

The concept of worship in Islam as a source of success and happiness makes it clear that worship includes every action a person performs only for the pleasure of his Creator and in accordance with His commandments. In addition to ritual acts like prayers performed in the mosque, fasting during the month of Ramadan or the performance of Pilgrimage, the Islamic concept of life includes all human activities, such as learning, training, eating, sleeping, and even working to earn a living in order to provide for one's family, and all other constructive activities necessary for the improvement of human life. This provides the human being with a treasure of good deeds that contribute to

the realization of an integral and righteous character and enhances his/her chances of experiencing a blissful life in this world and the next. The following quotes from the Quran guides man to the way of prosperity and success:

*“Oh, you who believe! Do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive (with might and main) in His cause: that you may prosper.”*

*“Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new life, a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.”<sup>11</sup>*

Faith, if sincere, means righteous conduct. When these two confirm each other, the grace of the Supreme Being transforms our life. Instead of being troubled and worried, we experience peace and contentment; instead of being assailed at every turn by false alarms and the assaults of evil, we enjoy serenity and peacefulness. Though the transformation is visible in this life, the “reward” in terms of the Hereafter will be far beyond our imaginations.

Muhammad said: *“Happiness, all happiness, is long life (full) of obedience to Allah.”<sup>12</sup>* It is also worth mentioning that obedience must be based on sound knowledge; for ignorance may distort the spirit of godliness and deprive worship of its meaning, and render it fruitless and almost futile.

In order to help further clarify the true credibility of these concepts in which many people

place their complete trust as the way to achieving happiness, the following examples have been included:

### **Christina Onassis**

For years the story of Christina Onassis dominated the minds of writers and news reporters. It was published in newspapers, books and magazines. Christina Onassis was the daughter of the famous Greek tycoon, Aristotle Onassis, who owned fleets of ships and airplanes, lakes and islands, large amounts of real estate, had several huge bank accounts, etc. Following the death of her father, Christina was the only legal heir to the vast resources of her father other than her late father's second wife Jacqueline Kennedy. The enormous liquid inheritances amounted to billions of dollars, in addition to the immovable properties such as fleets of ships and airplanes, lakes and islands, real estates, huge bank accounts, etc. It was an inheritance beyond belief. Certainly, to the judgment, reasoning, feelings and standards of most people, someone inheriting such a huge fortune should be the happiest person on earth, but was this true for Christina? The answer to this question can only be answered after thorough research of her life's story.

Christina got married to an American during her father's lifetime, but a few months later, the marriage went downhill and ended up in divorce. After the death of her father, she got married to a Greek for the second time, but their marriage lasted only a few months, if not weeks, before it was all over!

After that Christina stayed out of the marriage scene for quite some time, apparently looking for a happy life outside the bonds of marriage. However, that happiness did not materialize and, after a few years, she felt like trying to find happiness in married life once again. This time her choice for a husband was from a completely different culture and way of life. To many that knew her free style western life, her decision to marry a Russian communist, indeed, was an interesting, if not perturbing or excruciating experience. Asked by a member of the press about this decision, she had a ready answer, which was simple and short, but frank: "I am searching for happiness."

Of course, her two previous marriages were with men from the West; and since they both failed, she thought that she could "discover" some happiness in the East. But here too she was only trying her luck with no guarantees. When members of the press interviewed her for a second time, her unchanged reply was: "I am searching for happiness..."

But was she really happy with her marriage in Russia? She hardly remained with the Russian for more than a year before she eventually divorced him. Apparently, that was not the end of her marriage "dilemma". Back in Europe she decided to give it one more final try, this time with a French industrialist - the



fourth husband from a fourth different country in hardly a period of two years! What a miserable and insecure life she was leading! It was on one of those occasions at a party relating to this last marriage that a member of the press asked her whether she was the richest woman, and her frank reply went as follows: "Yes! I am the richest woman, but the unhappiest...."

The marriage with the French industrialist went ahead as planned, but it took only a few months for it to fall apart completely. Having failed to achieve happiness in marriage, Christina vowed not to marry again, and endeavored to achieve happiness "on her own". However, happiness was impossible for her even on her own, and she spent the rest of her life in a desperate manner, full of frustrations and disappointments; she embarked on a frenzy of trips between the world's major cities until, finally, she was found lying dead inside a hotel room in Argentina. Who killed her? Unfortunately, no one killed her. She committed suicide! Was her wealth able to buy her happiness?

### **Diego Maradona:**

For a time Diego Maradona's name was everywhere; it was in the media and literally on all commercial products and advertisements. Soccer (Football) earned him "wealth" and "pride". His luxury cars were estimated to the tune of \$1 million. These included a Ferrari F40 worth \$323,000, besides the Rolls Royces and the BMWs.

He was in all that and even more! But hardly did he complete four years in that "fame", "wealth" and

“prominence” when the world had to read a much more different story about him! He used cocaine for an Italian league game! What were the consequences? He was wanted in Italian courts for a related case of “cocaine possession”. And a few weeks after returning to his native homeland of Argentina, he was arrested for another round of cocaine possession and for supplying the drug free to others. Subsequently, his possessions, including the luxury cars, were put to auction! And after all that he still had to contend with the blame, ridicule, shame, disappointment and resentment from people of all walks of life, but largely, from his “loyal fans” particularly in Italy. There the anger and dismay were so loud that one newspaper conducted a public opinion poll, and found that Maradona was voted “Italy’s most hated man.” Similarly, in another report, a banner headline went as follows: “Italians hate Maradona”, claiming that he sets a bad example for young people. Did Diego Maradona achieve any real happiness from his soccer (football) career? The answer to this question is best given by none other than Maradona himself. During his “career” days he frequently used to say, “Soccer is in my blood, and I want the kids there (in Argentina) to get Soccer running in their blood”. However, months after his problems had come out publicly, he had some different confessions to the world, which went as follows:

“I will not play soccer professionally again. It is an irrevocable decision...the Argentine national team is also a closed chapter for me. I want to quit because I am sick of the pressure and the discipline...I am not blaming soccer, but everything that surrounds soccer,

and I am scared of having to face a situation of that kind.... I am not hiding my problems with drugs.... There is something deeper here than simply having taken cocaine... I find I don't enjoy myself anymore...."

### **Abdul-Haleem Hafiz**

The famous Egyptian singer, whose fame and popularity spread across the Arab world like wildfire, accumulated a tremendous wealth; yet, when he unexpectedly became infected with ringworm, his fortune couldn't aid him on his deathbed. He passed away at the young age of 43. He is still remembered to this day for his music, but the outcome of what a glamour-filled life was supposed to achieve in terms of happiness never seemed to materialize as he died from a disease that no longer exists in most modern countries.

"A college professor was jailed after he confessed to the kidnapping and holding of a woman in a closet for two weeks for his personal pleasure. The charge carries a 10 to 99 year prison sentence...."

"A Stanford University professor was fired for carrying drugs on campus; yet, he said that he would fight his dismissal and would not change his ways. He added; 'that is my right as long as I do not hurt anybody else....'"

"The president of Stanford Medical School has brought disciplinary charges of sexual harassment and professional misconduct against a male cardiology professor. The charges are based on complaints of two female medical students there...."

"Two doctors were fined and given prison sentences yesterday for performing a sex-change operation on a patient. He (the sex-change patient) filed a complaint in 1984 asserting that the operation had not been successful, and that he was in constant pain. Four years later he committed suicide."

A woman doctor cries out "Take away my certificate and give me a husband. Every morning at 7:00 o'clock, I shed tears behind the chauffeur who drives me in my car to my medical clinic or as she calls it 'prison cell' or 'grave'." She goes on saying: "Every time I reach my destination, I find women and children waiting for me. They looked at me with admiration and regarded my white coat as if it were a luxurious kind of clothes made of Persian silk, yet it was in my view the 'mourner's clothes'. Every time I reach my clinic, I fix the stethoscope around my neck as if it were a hangman's rope. Now, I am in my thirties and I am very pessimistic about the future." Then, she cries out!

"Take away my certificate, my coats and my money and let me hear the word 'mom'!". She then wrote a few lines describing her inner feelings: "People would call me doctor, but what benefit do I get from hearing it? So, tell those people who considered me as a good example, that now I am to be pitied. All I want and hope for is to have my own child to hug and caress, but can I buy it with all my money?"

"A pathologist who helped perform the autopsy on Elvis Presly says: 'the king of rock 'n' roll died of drugs and not heart disease....'it was a deadly mix of drugs that killed him...."

Although these examples appear to focus on those people who failed to achieve real, lasting happiness by societal standards, they do however allow us the opportunity to reflect on the reality that true happiness lies in living a balanced lifestyle which reflects the best of moral, spiritual, and ethical values. At the same time, it satisfies all human needs at all times, not over emphasizing one aspect of human character at the expense of others.

## CONCLUSION

A timely reminder to every one appeared in a recent issue of the Reader's Digest, where a certain top member of the United States Republican National Committee published his sorrowful words. He is now dead, and in his prime, he was blessed with material wealth, power and prestige but not with spiritual wealth. Unfortunately, it is too late for him to get our message, but for the many who are still alive and may be undergoing similar conditions, and for those who are still unsure about their future, the words of the honorable gentleman of the United States would undoubtedly be an eye opener (warning). His final, sorrowful words reveal his true inner feelings, that despite his material success i.e., power, wealth and prestige, there seemed to have been absolute emptiness in his soul. In his quest for material things, he forgot to develop his spiritual side. He forgot that all worldly things are but ephemeral and transitory in nature and what matters is our inner wealth which is more meaningful, abiding and lasting. His last words are full of frustration and uncertainty:

"I know I acquired more than most. You can acquire all you want and still feel empty. What power wouldn't I trade for a little more time with my family? What price wouldn't I pay for an evening with friends? It took a deadly illness to put me eye to eye with that truth, but it is a truth this country can learn on my dime.... I was never a religious man. 'All you have is your time on this earth', I used to say. Confronted with the prospect of my own end, I reevaluated. I did not

even know what I believed in. I welcome anyone who could tell me about his faith....!"

His last words clearly reveal that his life was a complete and dismal failure, full of emptiness without a trace of hope of spiritual fulfillment. It was tragic indeed, without a trace of hope. He spent all his lifetime amassing material wealth, leaving not an iota of spiritual nourishment, which would lead him to happiness, both during his lifetime and on his deathbed.

However, not all stories have a sad ending. Margaret Marcus, the well-known American author of *Islam in Concept and Practice*, *Islam Vs. The West*, and *Islam and Modernism*, found the road to happiness by adopting the Islamic concept as the guiding principle in life. After thorough research, she reached the following conclusion:

"In the fast pace of modern, mechanized living, where to be active and always on the run, are in themselves prized as virtues, while meditation and contemplation in solitude are scorned as worse than useless, the experience of modern men and women may be broad and varied, yet their minds remain superficial, fickle, and shallow...I will point out to them from personal experience that many modern, affluent people are miserable and unhappy even though they can do virtually anything they please. In addition, they enjoy the highest standard of living in history, they are the best dressed, best groomed, best fed, best housed, men and women anywhere in the world with the least drudgery, they have the most freedom, the greatest variety of interesting social contacts, are unexcelled in the extent of their secular education, have the widest

possible chances to enrich their self-indulgence and can do whatever they want, yet despite all these material advantages and opportunities, too many modern people are restless, dissatisfied, and unhappy.

However, in Islam pleasure and happiness are but the natural by-products of emotional satisfaction in one's actions, conscientiously performed under the guidance of Islamic principles. In Islam, obligations are always stressed before rights. In the materialistic world, achievement is equated with the capturing of political or economic power, fulfillment in the arts, sciences, or professions and acquiring fame through these, if one be exceptionally gifted, or enjoying an ample income from business, the professions, or commerce. In Islam achievement is rated on accomplishing what is enduring and worthwhile through benevolent, useful and productive work, no matter how humble it may be, and to refrain from wasting one's time in empty self-gratification, disgraced by immoral deeds.

Only in Islam was my quest for absolute values satisfied. Only in Islam, did I at last, find all that was true, good, and beautiful and which gives me meaning and direction to life, death and the pursuit of happiness.”(Why Islam is Our Choice, 1996)



## **Final Comments**

It has truly been my desire that the valuable information contained in Dr. Al-Omar's lectures be presented in a short, concise form, which would serve as a brief guide, helping each and every person in their choosing of future reading material relating to this extremely important topic. In turn, I hope it helps each and every human being in their personal search for happiness. May each and every one who reads this book be fortunate enough to find the road to happiness.

## Index of Footnotes

- Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, "Translation of the meanings of The Noble Quran", King Fahad Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran, Saudi Arabia, 1996. Chapter 20, page 425, line 114
2. Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, "Translation of the Meanings of Saheeh Al-Bukhari", Maktaba Dar-us-salam, Riyadh, 1994.
3. Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, "Translation of the meanings of The Noble Quran", King Fahad Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran, Saudi Arabia, 1996. (Chapter 20, page 425, line 114)
4. Ibid. (Chapter 35, page 585, line 28)
5. Ibid. (Chapter 39, page 624, line 40)
- Book of Hadeeth of Ibn Majah (No. 224)
- Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, "Translation of the meanings of The Noble Quran", King Fahad Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran, Saudi Arabia, 1996. (Chapter 5, page 161, line 87,88)
8. Sunan Al-Hakim (No. 7846)
- Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, "Translation of the Meanings of Saheeh Al-Bukhari", Maktaba Dar-us-salam, Riyadh, 1994.
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- for the Printing of the Holy Quran, Saudi Arabia, 1996.  
(Chapter 30, page 542, line 21)
11. Ibid. (Chapter 5, page 149, line 35)
  12. Musnad Al-Imam Ahmad (No. 14618)
  - 13- Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, "Translation of the meanings of The Noble Quran", King Fahad Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran, Saudi Arabia, 1996. (Chapter 16, page 362, line 97)

